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GROWING AIR TERMINAL IN TIKRIT OFFERS V CORPS SOLDIERS MORE OPTIONS FOR LEAVE TRAVEL

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FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Tikrit, Iraq -- For Soldiers going on leave, the trip just got easier with the opening of the new Tailwind International Sherpa passenger and cargo terminal here.

The new terminal started as an idea to have a "deployment only" terminal, but now hosts four bunkers. Two serve as passenger check-in and briefing room, while the other two are designated as sleeping quarters for overnight stays.



SGT 1ST CLASS NANCY McMILLAN
Pfc. Nicholas Lima and SGT Karen Alvarez process a Soldier with V Corps' 1st Infantry Division for a flight from the new air terminal at Forward Operating Base Speicher in Tikrit, Iraq.

"As Soldiers start arriving, we escort them to the first tent for sign-in," said Staff Sgt. Bennie Pringle, coordinator with the 536th Movement Control Team. "It's our first step in keeping track of the Soldiers from arrival to departure."

In between those times, Sgt. Karen Alvarez with Alpha Detachment of 38th Personnel Services Battalion of U.S. Army Europe's 1st Personnel Command, takes over.

"We check dog tags, ID cards, weigh the Soldier and their baggage, then input the information into the computer," said Alvarez.

This process is very important for accountability and flight purposes, said Alvaraez' coworker, Pfc. Nicholas Lima of V Corps' Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 33rd Field Artillery.

"Duffle bags and carry-ons are counted as a person," Lima said, "taking up seating space and adding weight to the aircraft."

Once the Soldier is in the system, it's only a matter of time, most often within hours, before they are loaded and on their way to Kuwait. While they wait, there's a TV in each bunker for entertainment, while Alvarez said her staff provides passengers with MREs, water and Gatorade.

The terminal operates 24 hours a day, and more than 100 Soldiers pass through each day, said Lima.

"On the average, five to eight Black Hawks, two to three Chinooks, and at least one C-130 will land at this terminal throughout the day and night," Lima said.

With plans to transport re-deploying soldiers and take- on more cargo flights, the terminal is destined to expand. Alvarez said a shower point, a small dining facility, more latrines and a shuttle bus have been proposed.

